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Environment and sustainable development: implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa

Report of the Second Committee*

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I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 94 (see A/58/484, para. 2). Action on sub-item (b) was taken at the 24th and 37th meetings, on 3 November and 11 December 2003. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/58/SR.24 and 37).

II. Consideration of draft proposals

A. Draft resolutions A/C.2/58/L.7 and A/C.2/58/L.7/Rev.1

2. At the 24th meeting, on 3 November, the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/58/L.7), which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its resolutions 56/196 of 21 December 2001, 57/259 of 20 December 2002 and other resolutions relating to the United Nations

* The report of the Committee on this item will be issued in nine parts, under the symbol A/58/484 and Add.1-8.

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Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

"*Recalling also* the decision of the World Summit on Sustainable Development to make the Global Environment Facility a financial mechanism of the Convention, and recognizing the strong commitment of the international community demonstrated by the subsequent decisions of the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility and the Council of the Facility in this regard,

"*Recognizing* the role of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention as the highest decision-making body in providing guidance to the Global Environment Facility as a financial mechanism for the Convention in its implementation,

"*Reaffirming* that the Convention is an important tool for poverty eradication, and recognizing its universality as well as the importance of the implementation of the Convention for meeting the Millennium Development Goals,

"*Expressing its deep appreciation* and gratitude to the Government of Cuba for hosting the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at Havana from 25 August to 5 September 2003,

"1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;

"2. *Welcomes* the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa at its sixth session to accept the Global Environment Facility as a financial mechanism of the Convention, and invites the Council of the Facility to make the necessary arrangements to put this decision into effect;

"3. *Also welcomes* the decision of the Council of the Global Environment Facility at its meeting held at Washington, D.C. from 14 to 16 May 2003 to establish a new operational programme on sustainable land management, and requests the secretariat of the Facility to discuss with the Convention secretariat the arrangements to facilitate collaboration between the Facility and the Convention and in this regard looks forward to a memorandum of understanding between the Conference of Parties to the Convention and the Council of the Facility;

"4. *Notes* the potential of the decision of the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility, held at Beijing from 16 to 18 October 2002, to make land degradation a new focal area of the Facility in the implementation of the Convention;

"5. *Notes with appreciation*, the increased number of affected developing country parties that have adopted their national, subregional and regional action programmes, and urges affected developing countries that have not yet done so to accelerate the process of elaboration and adoption of their action programmes, with a view to finalizing them as soon as possible;

"6. *Urges* the international community to take effective measures for the implementation of the Convention through bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes;

"7. *Urges also* the United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, the donor countries and other development agencies to integrate the provisions of the Convention in their strategies to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other agreed development goals;

"8. *Invites* all parties to pay promptly and in full the contributions required for the core budget of the Convention for the biennium 2002-2003, and urges all parties that have not yet paid their contributions for the year 1999 and/or the biennium 2000-2001 to do so as soon as possible in order to ensure continuity in the cash flow required to finance the ongoing work of the Conference of the Parties, the secretariat and the Global Mechanism;

"9. *Calls upon* Governments and invites multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, regional economic integration organizations and all other interested organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to contribute generously to the General Fund, the Supplementary Fund and the Special Fund, in accordance with the relevant paragraphs of the financial rules of the Conference of the Parties, and welcomes the financial support already provided by some countries;

"10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to make provision for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, including the seventh ordinary session of the Conference and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies, in his proposal for the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005;

"11. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

"12. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-ninth session the sub-item entitled 'Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa'."

3. At its 37th meeting, on 11 December, the Committee had before it a statement on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.7, submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/C.2/58/L.43).

4. At the same meeting, the Director of the Division of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs read out an oral correction to document A/C.2/58/L.43 (see A/C.2/58/SR.37).

5. Also at the same meeting, the representative of Morocco (on behalf of the Member States of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China), introduced a revised draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/58/L.7/Rev.1).

6. At the same meeting, the representative of the United States of America made a statement, in which a recorded vote was requested on operative paragraph 14 of revised draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.7/Rev.1 (see A/C.2/58/SR.37).

7. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted operative paragraph 14 of revised draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.7/Rev.1 by a recorded vote of 153 to 1 with 0 abstentions. The voting was as follows:[1]

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

United States of America.

Abstaining:

None.

8. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted revised draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.7/Rev.1, as a whole (see para. 14, draft resolution I).

9. Statements in explanation of vote after the vote were made by the representatives of Italy (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union) and Japan (see A/C.2/58/SR.37).

[1] The representative of Pakistan subsequently stated that, had he been present, he would have voted in favour.

B. Draft resolutions A/C.2/58/L.15 and A/C.2/58/L.60

10. At the 24th meeting, on 3 November, the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Year of Deserts and Desertification, 2004" (A/C.2/58/L.15), which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* chapter 12 of Agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development,

"*Recalling also* the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

"*Recalling further* the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development as well as the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development,

"*Having considered* decision 22/15 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on an international year of deserts and desertification,

"*Deeply concerned* by the exacerbation of desertification, particularly in Africa, and its far-reaching implications for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular on poverty eradication,

"*Conscious* of the need to raise public awareness and to protect the biological diversity of deserts as well as indigenous and local communities and the traditional knowledge of those affected by this phenomenon,

"1. *Decides* to declare 2004 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification;

"2. *Designates* the United Nations Environment Programme as focal point of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, in conjunction with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the United Nations Development Programme;

"3. *Invites* all countries to establish national committees or focal points and to celebrate the International Year by arranging appropriate activities;

"4. *Calls upon* all relevant international organizations and developed countries in a position to do so to support the activities related to desertification, including land degradation, to be organized by affected countries, in particular African countries and least developed countries;

"5. *Encourages* Member States to undertake special initiatives in observance of the International Year, with the goal of enhancing the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

"6. *Invites* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution."

11. At the 37th meeting on 11 December, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Irena Zubčević (Croatia), introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Year of Deserts and Desertification, 2006" (A/C.2/58/L.60), which she submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.15.

12. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.60 (see para. 14, draft resolution II).

13. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.60, draft resolution A/C.2/58/L.15 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

14. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution I
Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 56/196 of 21 December 2001 and 57/259 of 20 December 2002 and other resolutions relating to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[1]

Recognizing the strong commitment of the international community, demonstrated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development[2] and the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility, to make the Facility available as a financial mechanism of the Convention, pursuant to article 21 of the Convention,

Recognizing also the role of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention as the highest decision-making body in providing guidance on matters regarding the implementation of the Convention and in encouraging financial mechanisms to seek to maximize the availability of resources for affected developing countries, while respecting the respective mandates of the mechanisms,

Reaffirming that the Convention is an important tool for poverty eradication, particularly in Africa, and recognizing the importance of the implementation of the Convention for meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[3]

Reaffirming also the universal membership of the Convention, and acknowledging that desertification and drought are problems of global dimension in that they affect all regions of the world,

Expressing its deep appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Cuba for hosting the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Havana from 25 August to 5 September 2003,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;[4]

2. *Welcomes* the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, at its sixth session, to

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex, and resolution 2, annex.

[3] See resolution 55/2.

[4] A/58/158.

accept the Global Environment Facility as a financial mechanism of the Convention, pursuant to article 21 of the Convention;

3. *Also welcomes* the decision of the Council of the Global Environment Facility at its meeting, held in Washington, D.C., from 14 to 16 May 2003, to establish a new operational programme on sustainable land management and, in that regard, urges the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the Managing Director of the global mechanism, to consult with the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Global Environment Facility, with a view to preparing and agreeing upon a memorandum of understanding, as mandated by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, for the consideration of and adoption by the Conference of Parties to the Convention and the Council of the Global Environment Facility;

4. *Further welcomes* the outcome of the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility, held in Beijing from 16 to 18 October 2002, in particular the decision to designate land degradation as a new focal area of the Facility, which will, inter alia, support the implementation of the Convention;

5. *Notes with appreciation* the increased number of affected developing country parties that have adopted their national, subregional and regional action programmes, and urges affected developing countries that have not yet done so to accelerate the process of elaboration and adoption of their action programmes, with a view to finalizing them as soon as possible;

6. *Invites* affected developing countries to place the implementation of their action programmes to combat desertification high among their priorities in their dialogue with their development partners;

7. *Calls upon* affected parties, with the collaboration of relevant multilateral organizations, including the Global Environment Facility implementation agencies, to integrate desertification into their strategies for sustainable development;

8. *Urges* the international community to take effective measures for the implementation of the Convention through bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes;

9. *Also urges* the United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, the donor countries and other development agencies to integrate actions in support of the Convention in their strategies to support the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration;[3]

10. *Welcomes* the strengthened cooperation between the secretariat of the Convention and the global mechanism through the elaboration and implementation of a joint work plan aimed at maximizing the impact of resources and actions, avoiding duplication and overlap and tapping into the expertise, added value and network of each organization in a collaborative manner as action programmes are implemented;

11. *Invites* all parties to pay promptly and in full the contributions required for the core budget of the Convention for the biennium 2002-2003, and urges all parties that have not yet paid their contributions for the year 1999 and/or the biennium 2000-2001 to do so as soon as possible in order to ensure continuity in the cash flow required to finance the ongoing work of the Conference of the Parties, the secretariat and the global mechanism;

12. *Calls upon* Governments, and invites multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, regional economic integration organizations and all other interested organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to contribute generously to the General Fund, the Supplementary Fund and the Special Fund, in accordance with the relevant paragraphs of the financial rules of the Conference of the Parties,[5] and welcomes the financial support already provided by some countries;

13. *Takes note* of decision 6/23 on the programme and budget for the biennium 2004-2005, as an ongoing process of the Conference of the Parties to undertake a comprehensive review of the activities of the secretariat, as defined in article 23, paragraph 2, of the Convention;

14. *Requests* the Secretary-General to make provision for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, including the seventh ordinary session of the Conference and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies, in his proposal for the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005;

15. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

16. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-ninth session the sub-item entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa".

[5] ICCD/COP (1)/11/Add.1 and Corr.1, decision 2/COP.1, annex, paras. 7-11.

Draft resolution II
International Year of Deserts and Desertification, 2006

The General Assembly,

Recalling chapter 12 of Agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development,

Recalling also the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[1]

Recalling further the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development[2] and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development,[3]

Having considered decision 22/15 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on an international year of deserts and desertification,[4]

Deeply concerned by the exacerbation of desertification, particularly in Africa, and its far-reaching implications for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular on poverty eradication,

Recalling also the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development,

Conscious of the need to raise public awareness and to protect the biological diversity of deserts as well as indigenous and local communities and the traditional knowledge of those affected by this phenomenon,

1. *Decides* to declare 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification;

2. *Designates* the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, as focal point of the Year, in conjunction with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other relevant bodies of the United Nations;

3. *Invites* all countries to establish national committees or focal points and to celebrate the Year by arranging appropriate activities;

4. *Calls upon* all relevant international organizations and Member States to support the activities related to desertification, including land degradation, to be organized by affected countries, in particular African countries and least developed countries;

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. 1, resolution 2, annex.

[3] Ibid., resolution 1, annex.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 25* (A/58/25), annex.

5. *Encourages* countries to contribute, as they are able, to the Convention to Combat Desertification and to undertake special initiatives in observance of the Year with the goal of enhancing the implementation of the Convention;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session on the status of preparation for the Year.